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RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 0142
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 COTONOU 000440

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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DEPT FOR AF/W:BANKS, S/ES-O
PARIS FOR D'ELIA
KAMPALA FOR FLINTROP
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [EFIN](#) [SOCI](#) [PINR](#) [BN](#)

SUBJECT: BENIN: PRESIDENT BONI YAYI RESHUFFLES HIS GOVERNMENT

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11. (SBU) SUMMARY: President Boni Yayi reshuffled his cabinet on June 117. This move had been widely anticipated as a result of the April 2007 legislative elections. While Yayi was faced with making at least five ministerial re-assignments due to the election results, he has opted for a wholesale re-vamp of his administration, with 17 ministers who are new to the government and only nine incumbents holding on to their positions. In addition to personnel changes, the titles of several ministries have been changed, and various other ministries have been split or combined. The end result is an increase of the total number of ministers from 23 before the reshuffle to 26 now. Despite the presence of few prominent political names, Yayi's government maintains a strongly "technocratic" nature. END SUMMARY.

12. (U) The new Cabinet line-up is below:

Retained Ministers (9):

- Pascal Irene KOUPAKI, Minister of State, in charge of the Economy, Economic Forecasting Development and the Evaluation of Public Action (Koupaki was Minister for Development, Economy, and Finance. He has been promoted to Minister of State, but his previous responsibilities have been divided between this office and the newly renamed Ministry of Finance)
- Issifou Kogui N'DOURO, Minister of State in charge of National Defense (This is also a promotion to Minister of State.)
- Roger DOVONOU, Minister of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Fisheries
- Emmanuel TIANDO, Minister of Work and Public Service
- Idrissou SINA BIO GOUNOU, Minister of Administrative and Institutional Reform
- Soumanou TOLEBA, Minister of Culture, Tourism and Handicrafts
- Francois Gbenoukpo NOUDEGBESSI, Minister of Urban Development, Land Reform and Coastal Erosion Prevention (One of five ministers in the last government who was elected to the legislature. He is the only one of the five Yayi has asked to remain a minister.)
- Sakinatou Abdou Alfa Orou SIDI, Minister of Microfinance and Youth and Women's Employment (Minister Sidi has been promoted from Minister-delegate to full minister, and given additional duties for employment.)
- Albert Segbegnon HOUNGBO, Minister-Delegate for Budget in the Office of the Minister of Finance.

Newly Appointed Ministers (17):

- General Flix HESSOU, Minister of Interior and Public Security (General Hessou was formerly Minister N'Douro's Chief of Staff at the Ministry of National Defense, and is an alumnus of the African Center for Strategic Studies programs.)
- Dmolo Issa MOKO, Minister of Decentralization, Local Communities and Land Management (He was formerly Director of Local communities within the same ministry.)
- Moussa OKANLA, Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Integration, Francophonie and the Beninese Diaspora (He is a professor who studied at the University of Michigan, and has previously worked as consultant for USAID.) NOTE: The Foreign Ministry is reclaiming the responsibility for African Integration and Diaspora issues that had been shifted in April 2006 to a separate ministry.
- Soul Mana LAWANI, Minister of Finance (Prior to his appointment, he worked as Director of the Benin Electricity Company.)
- Grgoire AKOFODJI, Minister of Industry, Commerce, and Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (Mr. Akofodji is a political newcomer with no known political affiliation.)
- Sacca LAFIA, Minister of Mines, Energy and Water (Mr. Lafia is an influential political figure and a former deputy at the National Assembly. He was an International Visitor grantee in 2002.)
- Kessile TCHALA, Minister of Health (He is a medical doctor who was living in France and a close friend to President Yayi.)
- Christine OUINSAVI, Minister of Primary Education, Literacy and National Languages (A professor of Agronomy at the University of Abomey-Calavi in Benin.)
- Bernadette SOHOUDJI AGBOSSOU, Ministry of Secondary Education, and Vocational and Technical Training
- Vicentia BOCCO, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research (She is a medical doctor and the former President Yayi's campaign director.)
- Ganiou SOGLO, Minister of Youth, Sports and Leisure (The second son of former president Nicephore Soglo and a member of the Soglos' Renaissance du Benin political party.)
- Gnimbr DANSOU, Minister of Family and Children (A magistrate who

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was serving as deputy public prosecutor at the Cotonou Court of Appeal.)

- Juliette KOUDENOUKPO BIAOU, Minister of the Environment and the Conservation of Nature
- Cassa Gustave ANANI, Keeper of the Seals, Minister of Justice, Legislation and Human Rights (He is an Attorney at Law.)
- Alexandre HOUTONDJI, Minister in charge of the Relations with the Institutions, Spokesman of the Government (A medical doctor by profession who was serving as an advisor in the President's office.)
- Dsir ADADJA, Minister-Delegate for Communication and New Technology in the Office of the President of the Republic (Prior to his appointment, he was President Yayi's advisor for on telecommunication and new technologies and was Director of the parastatal Benin Telecom.)
- Armand ZINZINDOHOUE, Minister-Delegate for Transport and Public Works in the Office of the President of the Republic (He used to be the Chief of Staff of the same Ministry.)

13. (SBU) COMMENT: Through this cabinet reshuffle, President Yayi is apparently seeking to reward some close political allies and friends whom he did not appoint to his first government. Among the newly appointed ministers, those of Higher Education (Vincentia BOCCO), Health (Kessile TCHALA), and Public Relations with the Institutions (Alexandre HOUTONDJI) are viewed as close proteges of the President.

The President also took the opportunity to get rid of some ministers whose parties no longer side with him. Nonetheless, the new government retains a distinctly technocratic flavor. Overall reaction to the new cabinet in the press and among the general public has been positive. The massive changes among the ministerial positions comes as a bit of a surprise, even to some of the dismissed ministers, at least one of whom told the Ambassador the night before the new government was announced that he expected to keep his job. The departure of Foreign Minister Mariam Aladji Boni Diallo was among the surprises, as Ms. Diallo was widely respected. Despite dismissing Diallo, and three of the four other female ministers in his previous government, Yayi has succeeded in

increasing the overall number of female ministers in the government from five to six. END COMMENT.

¶4. (U) Post will provide additional biographical information about key new ministers as it becomes available.

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